***As we shed the ego and survive all the knocks of revealing these little truths about ourselves to one another, we become stronger, our organization becomes stronger and more secure, and our goal becomes realizable because we have begun to sublimate the big "I" to the collective "us" or "we."***

# *What Is Security?*

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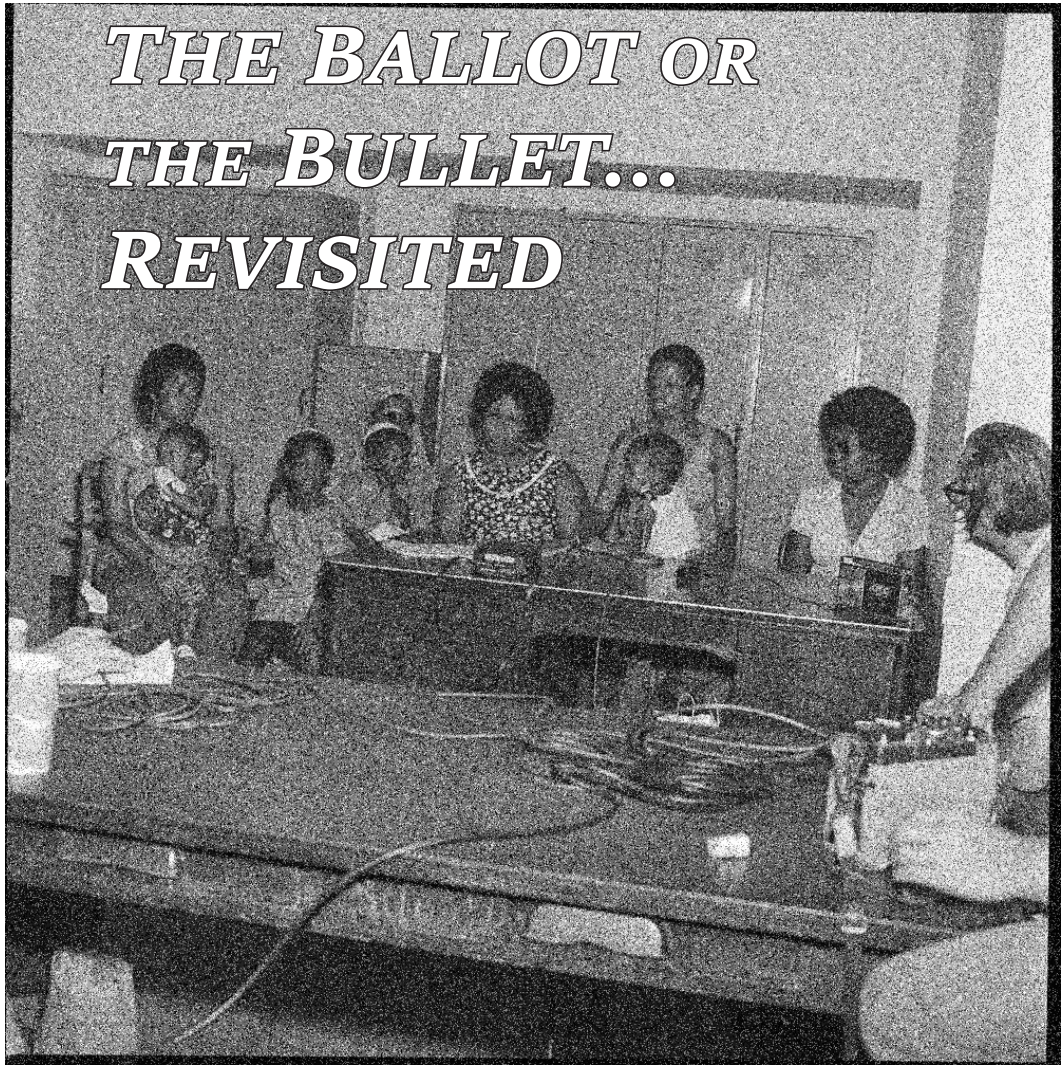


by

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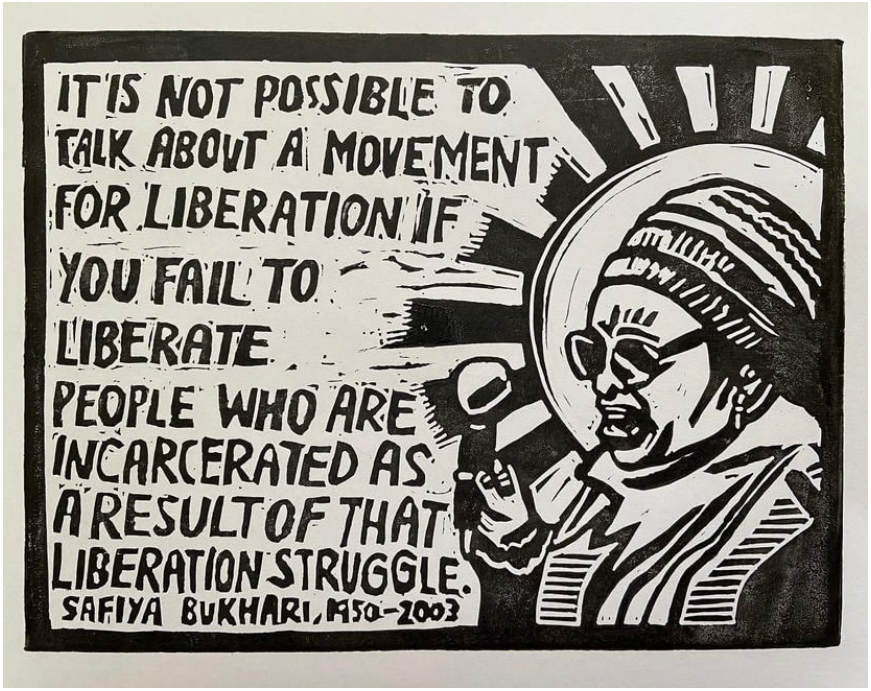


**This essay is undated; it was probably written in the mid-1990s. The Sun Tzu quote is in the original. The essay seems to have been written by Safiya in her capacity as a member of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA).**

**In this essay and others, Safiya grappled with the significance of COINTELPRO: What did it mean for organizers? How could the damage to relationships and organizations be repaired, and how could similar rifts be avoided in the future? While some survivors of the COINTELPRO years drew grim lessons that encouraged them to drop out of political activism, Safiya drew different conclusions. Her realization of the lengths to which the government and law enforcement would go to extinguish the challenge of Black liberation only fueled her determination to continue organizing.**

*Know yourself and know your enemies and in a thousand battles you'll never be defeated.*
*—Sun Tzu*

The word "security" most often brings to mind a uniformed person presenting an image of authority and sending out "I'm in control" and "Don't mess with me! I'm bad!" and "Don't even think about it!" signals. The next thing people usually think about—and do—is to go into the basic-training (calisthenics) and technical-training (weapons) mode. While this has passed for security, it's on a very superficial level. Once you dig a little past the obvious,

it usually proves to be no real security at all.

By definition, security means the freedom from danger, fear, and anxiety. Individual and organizational safety and well-being begin with the knowledge of what you're about, what the organization is about, your limitations, the organization's limitations, your strengths, and the organization's strengths. Knowledge is the key to security. History has shown that the best security depends upon the internal strength of the organization and the internal principles of the people who make up the organization.

Inherent in the Creed of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) is a line that says, "I will steal nothing from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister and spread no gossip." This is an extremely important component of individual and organizational security. The knowledge that the person next to you—the person working beside you—will not cheat you or lie and spread gossip about you is the basis for your feeling secure in your environment or within your organization. The ability to trust your comrades implicitly and to know with certainty what they will do in any circumstance is the best security.

The question, then, is how do we get to this point? It begins with knowing what you're about—what you want and what you believe in and how far you will go to obtain it. The reciprocal reality is knowing what the organization is about. If the purpose and mission of the organization is clear, not subject to interpretation, then people joining will not



the system, using armed struggle to achieve liberation, is tantamount to comparing apples and onions.

The initial premise—that the question of whether electoral politics or armed struggle within the context of the liberation of people of Afrikan descent is debatable—is erroneous. A debate poses two sides of the same question against one another. Equality (uniformity, conformity, likeness) and liberation (deliverance, emancipation, freedom) are not the same. In order to understand the issues we must understand the language.

The bottom line is that we can no longer assume that we're all striving for the same thing. Equality simply means that you want the same thing, same privileges, same access to things that the next person—the person with whom you seek to be equal—has. Freedom means you want the ability to determine for yourself, without social and political pressures, tainted as they are by racism, how you want to live your life and what you want to achieve for your family and community. How do you know if you've achieved equality? Can you ever achieve equality? Now, freedom is different. When you have the power to determine your destiny, you have achieved freedom. It's as simple as that.

When El Hajj Malik el Shabazz posed the question of the ballot or the bullet, he raised it in the context of the struggle for our freedom. The concept was that we would either win our freedom using the ballot or we would take it with the bullet. The choice was up to the system—what would be possible, and how. What do we visualize? What is our goal?

to exercise and practice martial arts again. I'm still not where I should be, but my confidence in my abilities is rising again and I am feeling more secure.

That's where it has to start. I recommend that we all begin to take stock of ourselves and take care of ourselves. Our internal security depends on how much we're capable of defending ourselves.

Personal self-defense training, such as martial arts training, can be obtained in a number of ways. We can use the expertise of people from within to set up training for our groups, or we can take classes at outside dojos. Either way is okay. We just have to develop and maintain the discipline to carry through on our objectives. This kind of training boosts our confidence in ourselves as well.

## What About Community Defense?

Defending our communities from outside forces is a natural outgrowth of self-defense. Building trust within ourselves and our organization and the Provisional Government makes it easier to build our defense effort. Let's lay the foundation by making that security real so that we can move forward, developing our community, building our national defense effort, and advancing to free the land!

## The Ballot or the Bullet...Revisited

Debating whether to work within the system, using the electoral process to achieve equality, or to work outside



be able to say that they thought the organization was about one thing when they joined, only to find out later that it was about something totally different.

This means that both the individual and the organization need to be open and honest. My rule of thumb is, "If the police know, the people should know." The history of COINTELPRO shows that the enemy will use anything and everything they know about you to their advantage. If there are no "dirty little secrets" that the enemy can drop in the media or tell your next-door neighbor or your comrades, then we have managed to take one weapon from them. As we shed the ego and survive all the knocks of revealing these little truths about ourselves to one another, we become stronger, our organization becomes stronger and more secure, and our goal becomes realizable because we have begun to sublimate the big "I" to the collective "us" or "we."

An example of "what the police know, the people should know" is the social security number. We give this number to anybody who asks for it—the credit card agency when we apply for a card, the employer, the school...anybody, that is, except the organization that we believe will lead us to liberation. Then there's our telephone number. The government can obtain it at will; they bug it, they get copies of our telephone bills, they own it—but we don't want to give it to each other. In application after application we tell them our mother's maiden name, how many siblings we have, our children's names and social security numbers, where we work and how long we've worked there, where we live and how long we've lived there, and where we lived

before that. We voluntarily give up this information because there's something we want in return.

Then there's the information they get through investigating or surveilling us. They find out who our friends and associates are, what organizations we belong to and which ones we used to belong to. They find out whether we have a criminal record and where we went to school. They find out our sexual liaisons and even some of our proclivities. They know our religious background. They know whom we owe what to and how much we're in debt. The enemy knows all this, and what they don't know already they investigate and make every effort to find out. We're left at the gate.

What's wrong with this picture? The root word of "security" is "secure." Inherent in this is feeling protected, safe, and guarded. This is all based on the trust we have in the entity or organization with which we are working or the people we have around us. If we trust them, we feel secure. Is the fact that we readily reveal information about ourselves to the u.s. government and its agencies a statement of our trust in the u.s. government—or the credit card bureaus, landlords, and places where we apply to work? Is the fact that we do not feel secure giving the same information to the organizations or people we work with a sign of our lack of trust in them?

The basic element of security is trust. Without trust there is no security. Trust comes through knowing and believing that you're safe within a specific area, whether it's a company of people or the confines of a building. When the Creed of the Republic of New Afrika says, "I will steal nothing



from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister and spread no gossip," the citizens of the RNA know that they can trust that this will in fact be the policy of the Provisional Government (PG-RNA). This security in the knowledge that the PG-RNA will protect its citizens will go a long way toward providing for the security of the Provisional Government.

## What About Self-Defense?

Now that we've established what security really is and put this level of security into practice, the rest becomes much easier. Our Provisional Government takes on the character of a liberated zone—a place where we feel secure and where we can carry out the task of freeing the land. Within the framework of this liberated zone the organizations that make up the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) can begin to develop security units to protect our communities from outside elements harmful to our people. The first element of this is self-defense training. Every element of defense begins with self. We must be able to defend ourselves.

The first step is being in shape. For years following my incarceration, I had gained a lot of weight and felt incapable of losing it. I was very unhealthy and unable to defend myself. I felt vulnerable and worried about being able to defend anyone else. Finally I decided I had to get myself in shape and under control. I had to lose the weight and get myself into a position where I could defend my community and myself again. Once the weight began to come off, I started